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ABSTRACT

This classroom observation unit includes a set of activities that are sequenced to create a one-semester field study course. The activities are organized into the following five modules: (1) observing teachers' classroom management strategies; (2) observing teachers' questioning strategies; (3) observing classroom activities routines; (4) observing teachers' grouping strategies; and (5) observing classroom grading practices. The unit was originally used to focus a field study experience that accompanied an undergraduate professional education course entitled, "Theories of Learning and Teaching." It could also be used to structure the field experience associated with a course on instructional methods. (JD)

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CLASSROOM OBSERVATION UNIT

Activities to Structure a Field Study Course

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Classroom Observation Unit

General Introduction

This unit includes a set of activities that are sequenced to create a one-semester field study course. The activities are organized into the following five modules:

(1) Observing Teachers' Classroom Management Strategies,

(2) Observing Teachers' Questioning Strategies,

(3) Observing Classroom Activity Routines,

(4) Observing Teachers' Grouping Strategies, and

(5) Observing Classroom Grading Practices.

The unit was originally used to focus a field study experience that accompanied an undergraduate professional education course entitled, "Theories of Learning and Teaching." It could also be used to structure the field experience associated with a course on instructional methods.

Field Study Module #1
Observing Teachers' Classroom Management Strategies

Introduction

Teachers attempt to control the behavior of students in various ways. Some of the strategies that teachers use to control students' behavior are productive of students' development; others seem to encourage students' dependency; still others seem to increase students' misbehavior. This module considers two aspects of classroom management. These are (1) the teacher's use of rewards and (2) the teacher's use of punishment.

When you conduct your classroom observation for this module, you may find it helpful to know the terms used to describe various management techniques. For this reason, the module provides a glossary of terms related to classroom management. It might be a good idea to review these terms before you complete the observation activities.

Rationale for Activities

The activities in this module are designed to focus your observation and analysis of teachers' classroom management techniques. You will be asked to observe various management strategies in the classroom and to interpret the effects of these strategies. When you have completed these activities, you should be able to distinguish between effective management strategies and ineffective ones. You should also be able to explain the applicability of different management strategies to various classroom situations. Finally you should be able to evaluate the effects of various classroom management strategies on the instructional process.

Glossary

antiseptic bouncing: sending a disruptive child who is about to "lose it" out of the room for a drink, bathroom break, or to run an errand

contingency: the systematic association of a behavior with its consequence

corrective feedback: providing accurate assessment of children's responses so that they can modify their performance appropriately

exclusion: removal of the child from the classroom or school setting

hurdle help: providing academic assistance at the point when a child shows frustration with an assignment

interest boosting: showing interest in the child's work just when the child is losing interest

isolation: separation of a child from his or her classmates

mild desist: a brief, private statement of disapproval that describes what is wrong and what should be done about it

negative reinforcement: removal of an aversive stimulus as a consequence of a desired behavior

overlapping: teacher's ability to attend to more than one issue at the same time

physical restraint: forceful control of children's physical movements so that they are unable to harm themselves or others

planned ignoring: avoidance of confrontation over a child' misbehavior, usually followed by some intervention to reduce the conflict that caused the misbehavior

positive reinforcement: rewarding a desired behavior

praise: a verbal comment that reinforces a desired behavior

proximity control: moving close to a student who is misbehaving or who appears to be about to misbehave

punishment: providing a negative consequence of a behavior in order to eliminate or reduce the frequency of the behavior

response cost: removal of a reinforcer for failure to produce desired behavior or failure to eliminate undesired behavior (e.g., time taken away from recess for being out of seat)

signal interference: non-verbal cues intended to communicate to a child that his or her behavior is unacceptable

threat: a warning that if a specified behavior continues, a certain punishment will occur

tension decontamination through humor: using humor to "clear the air" in a tense situation

time out: removal of a student from a reinforcing environment to a neutral environment for a brief "cooling off" period

with-it-ness: teacher behaviors that communicate to the students that the teacher knows what is going on in the classroom

Bibliography

You can find out more about teachers' use of various classroom management strategies by consulting the following sources:

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OBSERVING CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT -- Activity #1-1

Rewarding children is a way of insuring that they will continue to engage in the behaviors that are rewarded. A reward is another name for a positive reinforcement. Rewards include such things as: (1) praise, (2) gold stars, (3) "smiley faces", (4) stickers, (5) tokens to exchange for other rewards, (6) toys, (7) food, (8) special privileges, and (9) pleasant activities.

To determine whether or not some thing or event is a reward for a particular child, one must observe the effect of that thing or event on the child's future behavior. If praise, for example, increases the child's in-seat behavior, then praise is functioning as a reward. Sometimes, however, things or events that the teacher thinks will function as rewards actually do not serve this purpose. Some children do not feel rewarded by praise, for instance.

In this activity, you will observe your cooperating teacher's use of various rewards and their effects on children. Observe the teacher-student interaction carefully for one hour. During this period, record all instances in which the teacher seems to be rewarding a child. Then evaluate the effectiveness of this "reward". Use the form on the next page to record the information you obtain.

TEACHER'S USE OF REWARD

Name _____ Date of Observation _____

School _____ Cooperating Teacher _____

CODE: P = praise, GS = gold stars, SF = smiley faces, St = stickers, To = tokens, T = toys, F = food, SP = special privileges, PA = pleasant activities

Time	"Reward"	Effect on the child and on others in the class

OBSERVING CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT -- Activity #1-2

Punishment is a way to eliminate undesireable behavior temporarily. It is not highly effective in extinguishing undesireable behavior, and it is completely useless in shaping new behavior. Nevertheless, many teachers use punishment more frequently than they use rewards to control the behavior of students.

Punishments are usually administered in the classroom after the teacher has threatened to administer them. Such threats are often explicit, as in the case of the teacher who says, "If you continue to throw spit balls, I will send you to the office." Sometimes, however, threats are implicit. When a teacher has established a system of rules and penalties for breaking rules, he or she need not make an explicit threat. In this case, the established system of rules implies the threat. In either case, however, the threat serves to link the punishment to the offense. This contingent relationship between the offense and the punishment is the only element that makes punishment effective at all.

The following punishments are used frequently in public school classrooms: (1) shaming, (2) ridicule, (3) reprimand, (4) isolation, (5) exclusion, (6) removal of privileges, (7) grade cutting, (8) detention, and (9) spanking.

In this activity, you will observe your cooperating teacher's use of various punishments and their effects on children. Observe the teacher-student interaction carefully for one hour. During this period, record all instances in which the teacher threatens to punish or administers a punishment to a child. Describe the effect of the threat or punishment on the child's behavior. Use the form on the next page to record your observations.

TEACHER'S USE OF PUNISHMENT

Name _____ Date of Observation _____

School _____ Cooperating Teacher _____

CODE: Sh = shaming, Ri = ridicule, Re = reprimand, Is = isolation, Ex = exclusion, RP = removal of privileges, GC = grade cutting, De = detention, Sp = spanking

Time	Threat (Y/N)	Punishment (Y/N & code)	Effect on child

FIELD STUDY REPORT #1

Now that you have observed the use of both reward and punishment in the classroom, answer the following questions:

(1) What was the ratio of reward to punishment in the classroom? (Count the number of instances of each, then set up a ratio. Make sure that you observed the teacher's use of reward and punishment for a full hour each.)

(2) Explain why you think the ratio turned out the way it did.

(3) What were the effects of the teacher's praise on students?

(4) Do you think the teacher was effective in his or her use of praise? Why? Why not?

(5) How would you recommend that the teacher improve his or her use of praise? Explain the rationale for your recommendations.

(6) Do you think the teacher was effective in his or her use of punishment? Why? Why not?

(7) How would you recommend that the teacher improve his or her use of punishment? Explain the rationale for your recommendations.

(8) Did you observe any instances in which praise could not have been substituted for punishment? What were these? Why did the teacher have to use punishment in these instances?

(9) Did you observe any instances in which praise could have been substituted for punishment. What were these? Explain the ways in which the teacher could have used praise in each instance.

(10) Compare your answers to the above nine questions with those of another class member. How do your answers compare? Why do you think they were similar? Why do you think they were different?

Field Study Module #2
Observing Teachers' Questioning Strategies

Introduction

During class discussions, teachers ask questions for a variety of reasons. At the beginning of lessons, they may ask questions to stimulate interest in the topic. Sometimes teachers question students to assess their knowledge of the material covered in the lesson. Other questions are used to encourage critical thinking. Still other questions provide students with the opportunity to generate creative responses. On occasion, questions are also used to control students' behavior.

You can tell something about the sort of question being asked by the teacher's tone of voice and manner of presenting the question. Usually, thought questions and divergent questions are delivered in a somewhat dramatic tone of voice. When teachers ask these sorts of questions, they are challenging students to use critical or imaginative modes of thinking. Factual questions and choice questions are most often delivered matter-of-factly. These questions deal with students' knowledge; they are so routine in the classroom that they don't seem to warrant a special sort of delivery. Questions that are used to control students' behavior are often presented as threats. Teachers who deliver factual questions in a threatening tone of voice may, in fact, be using these questions more as a means of control than as a method of formative assessment.

Rationale for Activities

The two activities within this module require you to record and analyze data collected during an extended class discussion. Your analysis will tell you two things about the teacher's behavior: (1) it will indicate the types of questioning techniques that the teacher used, and (2) it will indicate the kind of feedback the teacher gave in response to students' correct and incorrect answers.

Glossary

choice questions: questions that either require students to give a "yes" or "no" answer or that require students to select one of two options (e.g., "Is the United States a capitalist or communist country?")

corrective feedback: the teacher's response to a student's incorrect answer particularly when the response includes: (1) a statement that the answer is wrong, (2) a statement of why the answer is wrong, and (3) a statement about how to correct the answer

divergent questions: questions that require students to make up original answers (e.g., "If you discovered a new star, what would you name it?")

factual questions: questions that require students to recall information from previous lessons or from textual material (e.g., "Who is the Greek god of war?")

praise: a verbal comment that is intended to reinforce a desired behavior

thought questions: questions that require students to reason through to a conclusion or explain something at length (e.g., "What is one effect of this summer's drought that you think will have long-term implications?")

wait-time: the time allowed for a student to respond after he or she has been asked a question

OBSERVING QUESTIONING STRATEGIES -- Activity #2

This activity has two parts. First, you will observe a class discussion and record information about the questioning strategies that the teacher used. Then, you will observe another class discussion and record information about how the teacher responded to students' correct and incorrect answers to questions. It probably will make sense to do the first observation during one of your hour-long visits to the classroom and the second observation during another visit.

When you have completed both observations, answer the questions for Field Study Report #2. The process of answering these questions will help you analyze the data you collected during your observations.

Instructions for First Observation

1. As you listen to the class discussion, use Form #1 to record information.

2 Whenever the teacher calls on a student to answer a question, list the name or initials of that student in the left-hand column of the form. If you do not know the students' names, make a seating chart of the classroom and number each seat. Then list the student's seat number rather than his or her name on Form #1. (If you use a seating chart for this purpose, please turn it in with your field study report.)

3. After you list the student's name or initials, make a determination about the teacher's method of selecting a respondent. Use Coding Chart #1 below to select the appropriate code for the type of method used.

4. Then use the same chart to determine the type of question that the teacher asked.

5. Finally, use the chart to identify the teacher's tone and manner of presenting the question.

6. You may want to practice coordinating this activity for a few minutes before attempting to categorize every question asked during a class discussion.

7. Don't worry if you miss a question while you are coding a previous one. This situation is bound to occur during this sort of observation.

8. Do try to complete your coding of each questions as efficiently as possible.

CODING CHART #1

Category A = Selection of Respondent

1. Called on volunteer after asking question.
2. Called on nonvolunteer after asking question.
3. Named student before asking question.

Category B = Type of Question

1. Choice question.
2. Factual question.
3. Thought question.
4. Divergent question.

Category C = Tone and Manner of Presenting Question

1. Question presented as challenge or stimulation.
2. Question presented matter-of-factly.
3. Question presented as threat or test.

FORM #1
QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

Student	Category A	Category B	Category C
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			
13.			
14.			
15.			
16.			
17.			
18.			
19.			
20.			
21.			
22.			
23.			

Instructions for Second Observation

1. As you listen to the class discussion, use Form #2 to record information.

2. Whenever a student answers a question, list the name or initials of that student in the left-hand column of the form. If you do not know the students' names, make a seating chart of the classroom and number each seat. Then list the student's seat number rather than his or her name on Form #2. (If you use a seating chart for this purpose, please turn it in with your field study report.)

3. If you determine that the student's answer is correct, use Category B of Coding Chart #2 to select the code number that best approximates the teacher's response to the correct answer. Record the code number on Form #2 under the section titled, "Category B."

4. If you determine that the student's answer is partially correct, use Category C of Coding Chart #2 to select the code number that best approximates the teacher's response to the partially correct answer. Record the code number on Form #2 under the section titled, "Category C."

5. If you determine that the student's answer is in correct, use Category D of Coding Chart #2 to select the code number that best approximates the teacher's response to the incorrect answer. Record the code number on Form #2 under the section titled, "Category D."

6. You may want to practice coordinating this activity for a few minutes before attempting to categorize every response to students' answers.

7. Don't worry if you miss the opportunity to code an answer while you are trying to code an earlier one. This situation is bound to occur during this sort of observation.

8. Do try to complete your coding of each answer as efficiently as possible.

CODING CHART #2

Category A = Correctness of Response

1. Completely correct.
2. Partially correct.
3. Completely incorrect.

Category B = Teacher's Response to Correct Answers

1. Praise (e.g., teacher says, "good," "nice job," etc.).
2. Acknowledgement (e.g., teacher says, "correct," "ok," etc.).
3. No response.

Category C = Teacher's Response to Partially Correct Answers

1. Criticizes (e.g., teacher says, "you should know this").
2. Says response is incorrect (e.g., says, "no, that's wrong").
3. Teacher answers question.
4. Teachers asks a different, unrelated question.
5. Repeats question.
6. Rephrases question.
7. Probes (i.e., asks questions that lead student to correct response).
8. Gives corrective feedback (i.e., tells what part of answer is correct, what part incorrect, and explains why).

Category D = Teacher's Response to Incorrect Answers

1. Criticizes (e.g., teacher says, "you should know this").
2. Says response is incorrect (e.g., says, "no, that's wrong").
3. Teacher answers question.
4. Teachers asks a different, unrelated question.
5. Repeats question.
6. Rephrases question.
7. Probes (i.e., asks questions that lead student to correct response).
8. Gives corrective feedback (i.e., says that the answer is wrong and explains why).

FORM #2
TEACHER'S RESPONSES TO STUDENTS' ANSWERS

Student	Category A	Category B	Category C	Category D
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15.				
16.				
17.				
18.				
19.				
20.				
21.				
22.				
23.				

FIELD STUDY REPORT #2

Now that you have observed the teacher's questioning strategies and his or her responses to students' correct, partially correct, and incorrect answers, you will be able to answer the following questions:

(1) How many questions did the teacher ask during the lesson you observed? How many of these questions were factual questions? How many were choice questions? How many were thought questions? How many were divergent questions?

(2) Did the teacher seem to ask different types of questions to particular sorts of students (e.g., high ability vs. low ability, white vs. black, girls vs. boys)? Explain what you observed that might lead you to believe that this did or did not occur.

(3) How did the teacher select students to answer the questions he or she posed?

(4) What tone of voice did the teacher most often use when asking questions?

(5) Did you observe any instances in which the teacher used questions to test students or control their behavior? Describe any such instances.

(6) Were questions integrated into an orderly sequence, or did they seem to be random or unrelated? Explain your interpretation.

(7) What procedure was usually followed when a student responded with a correct answer? Did the teacher usually acknowledge the response, praise the student, or ignore the response?

(8) What procedure was usually followed when students responded with partially correct answers? Describe the most common strategy that the teacher used in such cases?

(9) What procedure was usually followed when students responded with incorrect answers? Describe the most common strategy that the teacher used in such cases?

(10) How often did the teacher provide corrective feedback to student responses? Describe the teacher's use of this technique.

(11) How often did the teacher use praise in response to students' correct answers? Was praise usually coupled with corrective feedback, or was it used alone?

(12) How often was criticism used? If you can, cite particular instances. Repeat the teacher's criticism verbatim if possible.

(13) How were praise and criticism distributed among the students? Did some students receive a major portion of the praise or criticism? Did you notice any patterns?

(14) Were there times when the students did not understand when an answer was correct? How could the teacher have improved the situation?

(15) When a student gave a partially correct or an incorrect answer did the teacher repeat the question or did he or she rephrase it? If both strategies were used, which one seemed to be most effective? Why?

(16) How often did the teacher provide answers to his or her own questions? Was this strategy effective? Why or why not?

Field Study Module #3
Observing Classroom Activity Routines

Introduction

Most teachers have habitual ways of doing things in the classroom. Your task here is to describe the routines used by the teacher in whose class you are working. In particular, this module asks you to take note of the classroom rules and the classroom procedures that are established.

Almost all teachers establish general classroom rules. In addition, most teachers expect students to act in characteristic ways during particular activities. For example, some teachers may tolerate "calling out" answers in class discussions of literature, whereas they might not tolerate such behavior during arithmetic games or spelling bees. Thus, acceptable student behavior varies with the activity; the characteristic nature of this behavior helps to define an activity routine.

One way that teachers enforce classroom rules is by setting up routines that define acceptable behavior. These routines enable students to engage in actions of certain sorts without having to ask permission. In many classrooms teachers establish procedures so that students know what to do when they want to get a drink, go to the bathroom, or sharpen a pencil. Some teachers also establish procedures for students to use when they hand in papers, talk with other students quietly, get snacks, or move from one activity to another. In some highly structured classrooms, students are taught to follow specific procedures for walking from place to place within the classroom.

Teachers vary in the rules and procedures they establish. They also differ in the degree to which they are consistent in applying rules and requiring students to follow established procedures.

Rationale for Activities

The two activities within this module require you to record and analyze data collected during two hour-long observation periods. Your analysis will answer four questions about the activity routines in the classroom: (1) What are the established classroom rules? (2) How consistently are the established rules enforced? (3) What are the routine procedures that students are told to follow? (4) How often do the students follow the established procedures?

OBSERVING CLASSROOM ACTIVITY ROUTINES - Activity #3-1
Rules and Rule Enforcement

This activity has two parts. First, you will ask your cooperating teacher to list the classroom rules that he or she has established. You will list each rule on a separate sheet of Form #1. List only the five most important classroom rules.

Then you will observe instruction for one hour. During this observation period, you will be looking for instances when a student breaks one of the rules. You will record the event on the sheet with the rule listed on it; then you will answer the questions about the incident. Each sheet includes space to record three incidents. If there are more than three cases in which students break the same rule, use additional sheets. Do not stop recording incidents just because you have filled one or more sheets of the form that is devoted to a particular rule.

FORM #1
Rules and Rule Enforcement

SHEET 1
Classroom Rule: _____

Rule Infraction #1 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

Rule Infraction #2 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

Rule Infraction #3 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

FORM #1 -- continued

SHEET 2
Classroom Rule: _____

Rule Infraction #1 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

Rule Infraction #2 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

Rule Infraction #3 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

FORM #1 -- continued

SHEET 3
Classroom Rule: _____

Rule Infraction #1 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

Rule Infraction #2 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

Rule Infraction #3 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

FORM #1 -- continued

SHEET 4
Classroom Rule: _____

Rule Infraction #1 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

Rule Infraction #2 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

Rule Infraction #3 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

FORM #1 -- continued

SHEET 5
Classroom Rule: _____

Rule Infraction #1 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

Rule Infraction #2 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

Rule Infraction #3 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

FORM #1 -- continued

EXTRA SHEET
Classroom Rule: _____

Rule Infraction #1 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

Rule Infraction #2 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

Rule Infraction #3 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

FORM #1 -- continued

EXTRA SHEET
Classroom Rule: _____

Rule Infraction #1 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

Rule Infraction #2 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

Rule Infraction #3 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

FORM #1 -- continued

EXTRA SHEET
Classroom Rule: _____

Rule Infraction #1 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

Rule Infraction #2 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

Rule Infraction #3 (Describe how the student broke the rule.) _____

_____

What did the teacher do when the student broke the rule? (e.g., gave a warning, punished the student, ignored the incident)_____

_____

How did the student react to the teacher's response? (e.g., questioned the teacher's authority, apologized, made fun of the teacher's response)

_____

OBSERVING CLASSROOM ACTIVITY ROUTINES - Activity #3-2
Classroom Procedures

This activity will be conducted differently from Activity #1. Rather than finding out classroom practices in advance of your observation, in this case you will use your observation to try to form inductive generalizations about the classroom procedures that the teacher has established. After the observation period, you will share your list of procedures with your cooperating teacher and ask the teacher to corroborate your impressions about the nature of classroom procedures.

Use Form #2 to record your observations and verifications. The form has a section for each of several routine classroom procedures. When you see a student engage in an activity that relates to a particular procedures (e.g., the procedure for getting a drink), record information in the appropriate sections of the form.

FORM #2
Classroom Procedures

Getting a Drink:

Student	Student's Action	Teacher's Reaction	Hypothesized Procedure

VERIFICATION (The teachers's description of the procedure):

Sharpening a Pencil:

Student	Student's Action	Teacher's Reaction	Hypothesized Procedure

VERIFICATION (The teachers's description of the procedure):

FORM #2 -- continued

Using the Restroom:

Student	Student's Action	Teacher's Reaction	Hypothesized Procedure

VERIFICATION (The teachers's description of the procedure):

Getting Materials for an Activity (e.g., reading group):

Student	Student's Action	Teacher's Reaction	Hypothesized Procedure

VERIFICATION (The teachers's description of the procedure):

FORM #2 -- continued

Changing Classes or Subjects of Study:

Student	Student's Action	Teacher's Reaction	Hypothesized Procedure

VERIFICATION (The teachers's description of the procedure):

Turning In Completed Class Work:

Student	Student's Action	Teacher's Reaction	Hypothesized Procedure

VERIFICATION (The teachers's description of the procedure):

FORM #2 -- continued

Turning In Completed Homework:

Student	Student's Action	Teacher's Reaction	Hypothesized Procedure

VERIFICATION (The teachers's description of the procedure):

Asking for Teacher's Help:

Student	Student's Action	Teacher's Reaction	Hypothesized Procedure

VERIFICATION (The teachers's description of the procedure):

FORM #2 -- continued

Finding Something to Do After Work is Completed:

Student	Student's Action	Teacher's Reaction	Hypothesized Procedure

VERIFICATION (The teachers's description of the procedure):

_____

FIELD STUDY REPORT #3

In this module you have observed classroom rules and routines. Now you can summarize your findings by answering the questions below.

(1) What classroom rules did your cooperating teacher establish?

(2) Did your cooperating teacher invoke sanctions when students broke the rules? What sanctions did he or she invoke?

(3) Did your cooperating teacher ever ignore an instance in which a student broke a rule? Under what circumstances did the teacher ignore this rule infraction?

(4) What classroom routines did you infer from your observations of students' behavior?

(5) How did your inferences compare with your cooperating teacher's description of the routines that he or she established in the classroom?

(6) What role did classroom routines play in promoting students' good behavior?

Field Study Module #4
Observing Teachers' Grouping Strategies

Introduction

Grouping arrangements are crucial to school's organization. If you were asked to list the various types of school grouping arrangements, you might overlook some of the most fundamental ones because they seem so integral to the functioning of public schools. For example, you might not list the practice of grouping children into "grades" based on their chronological age. Age-grade placement, however, is a practice that has not always been used. This type of grouping arrangement came about as a result of mid-nineteenth century school reform.

Throughout the history of U.S. education, grouping arrangements have been used most frequently as a method of managing large groups of children. Thus, their function has been school-centered rather than student-centered. In the progressive era, and at various times thereafter, school reformers have recommended that student-centered grouping arrangements replace the traditional school-centered arrangements. Although student-centered grouping typically improves student achievement, it conflicts with the traditional ways in which schools are organized. Thus, less effective grouping practices are often used in place of the more effective, student-centered arrangements.

Recent school effectiveness research and meta-analyses of previous research support many of the recommendations made by the progressives. This research substantiates the importance of implementing grouping practices based on the needs of children rather than on the administrative needs of the school. The research even challenges some of the assumptions underlying age-grade grouping.

Some school grouping practices have been criticized not only because they fail to increase student achievement but also because they discriminate against low-income and minority children. Several court decisions regarding ability grouping (tracking) have found the practice to be unconstitutional when it results in the segregation of minority students.

This field study module focuses on four grouping strategies: (1) ability grouping - within grade, (2) ability grouping - between grades, (3) team grouping, and (4) skill grouping (teacher and peer instructed). The module is organized to provide you with a synopsis of the research on each of these practices followed by two observation activities.

Rationale for Activities

In this field study module you will observe classroom grouping arrangements. Because the basis for a teacher's grouping will probably not be apparent, this module will rely heavily on interview techniques. By questioning your cooperating teacher and other school personnel, you will find out about the grouping arrangements used in the classroom and in the school. When you have completed these interviews, you should be able to explain the grouping methods used. Based on a brief summary of research provided at the beginning of each activity, you should also be able to evaluate the teacher's and the school's choice of particular grouping strategies.

Research Syntheses

Ability Grouping -- Within Grade. A number of researchers have studied the effects of segregating children of the same age into different groups based on a measure of their academic ability. Kulik and Kulik (1982) conducted a meta-analysis of these studies and concluded that ability grouping has positive effects only for honors students at the high school level. Other students do not seem to achieve any better when they are grouped by ability than when they are grouped randomly. In fact, students assigned to "low-ability" sections achieve less well than they would if they were placed in heterogeneous (mixed-ability) sections.

Within the classroom, rigid ability grouping seems also to have negative effects on the students classified as "low-ability". Typically when students are viewed as low achievers, teachers have low expectations for them. Studies (e.g., McDermott & Aron, 1978; Rist, 1970; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968) show that teachers ask these students fewer questions, offer them less encouragement, and blame them for misbehavior more often than those whom they perceive as average or high achievers.

Researchers have found that the careful use of certain sorts of ability grouping can increase the effectiveness of instruction. Stratified ability grouping (Findley & Bryan, 1971), for example, provides a compromise between rigid homogeneous grouping and random heterogeneous grouping. In general, ability grouping can be effective when teachers adhere to the following precautions:

(1) use appropriate achievement measures in individual subject areas to determine students' placement in groups,

(2) group by achievement in a subject or skill not by general ability,

(3) evaluate students' progress often and reassign them to groups based on their progress,

(4) maintain high expectations for achievement in all groups, and

(5) provide corrective feedback, encouragement, and fair treatment to all students regardless of group assignment.

Ability Grouping -- Between Grades. When ability grouping within a grade level does not meet the needs of individual students, schools consider implementing a between-grade grouping strategy. The two variants of this strategy are retention and acceleration.

Retention, colloquially known as "failing a grade", is the practice of having children repeat a grade in school if they do not succeed in that grade the first time. This practice rests on the assumption that repeating the same methods and materials will bring greater gains in retained students' achievement than would promotion to the next grade level. Research has tested this hypothesis using two major approaches. One approach compares retained with promoted students; another measures the progress of retained students

only. Unfortunately, both of these approaches are seriously flawed. Thus, the mixed results of research are hard to interpret.

Researchers do know, however, the effects of teachers' expectations on students' progress. If teachers are aware that certain students have been retained, they are more likely to treat those students like "low-ability" students (Rist, 1970). In addition students who repeat a grade are not being exposed to new, challenging material or to a stimulating peer group. Their achievement may suffer as a result of these lacks.

Unlike the studies of retention, the research on acceleration is overwhelmingly positive. Although acceleration has a bad reputation among teachers, it is one of the most effective school practices documented to date. Rather than causing harm to the cognitive or emotional development of children, acceleration appears to enhance their productive growth in these areas (see Kulik & Kulik, 1984).

One of the factors influencing the positive results of acceleration research has been the nature of the population of accelerates studied. Typically, these have been bright students, many of them classified as gifted. These youngsters demonstrate advanced verbal and reasoning skills as well as the ability to learn rapidly. In general, acceleration for these students places them at a point in the curriculum that more closely approximates their level of performance. It is not surprising, therefore, that these students prosper in these placements. However, it is somewhat surprising to find that bright underachievers also make significant academic progress when they are accelerated.

In summary, research suggests that acceleration is a highly effective grouping strategy whereas retention is not necessarily effective at all. Unfortunately, retention occurs much more frequently than does acceleration.

Team Grouping. Researchers have found that cooperative learning arrangements improve students' learning in certain situations. For example, problem-solving activities and research projects can be organized as cooperative learning experiences. However, some types of learning seem to be best accomplished individually.

Team learning is an approach that combines group cooperation and between-group competition (Slavin, 1981). Some team learning arrangements have been formalized into systems, such as the Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT) approach and the Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) approach. Both approaches use team interaction to provide students with drill and practice. Teachers use periodic quizzes (or tournaments) to monitor students' learning.

Less formal uses of team grouping involve organizing the classroom into teams for certain activities. These activities need not involve team competition, although some students do seem to be motivated by competition. Teams can function to provide students with a supportive peer group. The more capable team members can coach the less capable ones. All team members can gain self-esteem from identification with the group.

Team grouping arrangements are effective in heterogeneous classes. In such classes, the teacher must organize team assignments so that different activities are assigned to individual team members. The team is then instructed to work cooperatively so that each individual can complete his or her assignments.

Skill Grouping and Peer Tutoring. Two other grouping strategies have been found to be effective when used judiciously in the classroom. These are skill grouping and peer tutoring. Both are useful for teaching basic skills in a heterogeneously grouped classroom.

Skill grouping involves placing students in groups based on their need for instruction in a particular skill. For example, the teacher might discover that some students need to review the "6 times tables". For the purpose of this review, the teacher groups these students together. Then the teacher or some member of the class provides the necessary review. When the class is studying something else, these students may be grouped differently. Thus the grouping arrangement is transitory. Students do not associate themselves with the "slow group" or the "bright group" but rather get to participate in many different groups that are designed to meet their specific academic needs.

Peer tutoring is a strategy that allows students to take an active role in instruction. One type of peer tutoring arrangement pairs students who have mastered a skill with those who have not. In this arrangement the tutors provide remedial help to the tutees. Another way to use peer tutoring also is effective. In this arrangement the teacher assigns topics to different class members. These class members then hold teaching sessions with small groups of their classmates. Both of these peer tutoring strategies increase the achievement of the tutors as well as the tutees.

Peer-tutoring can be cross-age as well as same-age. In a cross-age peer tutoring situation, older students tutor younger ones. This arrangement gives the older students a chance to review material (such as times tables or spelling words) that they may have forgotten. For this or perhaps for other reasons, cross-age peer tutoring has positive effects on the achievement of both the tutor and the tutee.

Bibliography

You can find out more about the use of various grouping strategies by consulting the following sources:

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OBSERVING GROUPING STRATEGIES -- Activity #4-1
Ability Grouping

NOTE: This activity has three parts. Both Part 1 and Part 2, however, are appropriate only for those student teachers who are observing in elementary classrooms. Those observing in secondary classrooms may omit these two parts of this activity. All student teachers should complete Part 3.

PART 1. Interview your cooperating teacher using the form provided below.

Interviewer _____ Date of Interview _____
School _____ Grade Level _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Record your cooperating teacher's answers to the following questions.

1. Do you assign students to different reading groups based on either their ability or achievement?

2. How do you determine an individual student's placement in a reading group?

3. How often to you reevaluate students' reading group placements?

4. Do you assign students to different math groups based on either their ability or achievement?

5. How do you determine an individual student's placement in a math group?

6. How often to you reevaluate students' math group placements?

7. Do you use ability grouping in subject areas other than reading and math? If so, explain your use of ability grouping in these areas.

8. What do you see as the chief advantages of ability grouping?

9. What do you see as the chief disadvantages of ability grouping?

10. If your school tracked students into classroom groups by ability, would you prefer to teach a high-ability section, an average section, or a low-ability section? Explain your choice.

PART 2. List in column one of the form below the first names of students in the highest reading group. List in column two the first names of students in the lowest reading group. Then observe the class for an hour during recitation in either social studies or science. Make a mark next to a student's name each time the teacher calls on that student. Compute the average number of times that students in each reading group were called on.

COLUMN ONE	COLUMN TWO
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

AVERAGE # OF TIMES COLUMN ONE STUDENTS WERE CALLED ON = _____

AVERAGE # OF TIMES COLUMN TWO STUDENTS WERE CALLED ON = _____

PART 3. Interview the principal of the school in which you are observing and record his or her responses on the form below.

Interviewer _____ Date of Interview _____
School _____ Grade Level _____

1. How many students attend this school?

2. How many students are retained each year?

3. What is the school's policy on retention?

4. How many students are accelerated each year?

5. What is the school's policy on acceleration?

6. What tests are administered when a teacher or parent recommends that a child be retained?

7. What tests are administered when a teacher or parent recommends that a child be accelerated?

8. Are students ever retained for the purpose of increasing their eligibility for sports?

9. What due process rights do parents have when the school recommends retention?

10. What due process rights do parents have when the school rejects acceleration as an option?

OBSERVING GROUPING STRATEGIES -- Activity #4-2
Team Grouping, Skill Grouping, and Peer Tutoring

NOTE: This activity has two parts. All student teachers should complete both parts of the activity.

PART 1. Interview your cooperating teacher and record his or her responses on the form below.

Interviewer _____ Date of Interview _____
School _____ Grade Level _____

1. Do you ever use team grouping techniques? Why? Why not?

2. In what situations have you found team grouping techniques to be effective?

3. How do you organize students into different teams?

4. Do you use a team grouping approach that involves between-group competition? If so, explain.

5. Do you provide different assignments to different team members? Why? Why not?

6. Have other teachers in this school used team grouping arrangements? If so, have they had positive experiences with this approach to grouping?

PART 2. Interview your cooperating teacher and record his or her responses on the form below.

Interviewer _____ Date of Interview _____
School _____ Grade Level _____

1. Do you ever use skill grouping techniques? Why? Why not?

2. In what situations have you found skill grouping techniques to be effective?

3. Do you ever use peer tutoring techniques? Why? Why not?

4. In what situations have you found peer tutoring techniques to be effective?

5. Have you and another teacher ever used cross-age peer tutoring techniques? If so, what were the advantages and disadvantages of this arrangement?

6. Have other teachers in this school used skill grouping or peer tutoring arrangements? If so, have they had positive experiences with these approaches to grouping?

FIELD STUDY REPORT #4

Now that you have found out about school-wide grouping strategies as well as grouping strategies used in the classroom, you will be able to answer the following questions:

NOTE: Only student teachers who have observed in elementary schools will be able to answer the first five questions on this report.

(1) For instruction in what subject areas does your cooperating teacher use ability grouping?

(2) How often does your cooperating teacher reevaluate students' placement in ability groups?

(3) What is your cooperating teacher's attitude toward ability grouping?

(4) With what ability-level students does your cooperating teacher prefer to work?

(5) Does your cooperating teacher call on students from the highest-ability group more frequently than he or she calls on students from the lowest ability group? How much more often?

(6) Does the school in which you are observing have a policy on retention of students? What is the policy?

(7) Does the school in which you are observing have a policy on acceleration of students? What is the policy?

(8) What percentage of students are retained in grade each year? What percentage are accelerated?

(9) What is the school principal's attitude toward retention?

(10) What is the school principal's attitude toward acceleration?

(11) In what ways does your cooperating teacher use team grouping techniques?

(12) In what ways does your cooperating teacher use skill grouping techniques?

(13) In what ways does your cooperating teacher use peer tutoring techniques?

(14) What is your cooperating teacher's attitude toward grouping strategies that are <u>not</u> based on students' abilities?

Field Study Module #5
Observing Classroom Grading Practices

Introduction

Assessment involves gathering information for the purpose of making decisions. Grading, which is one of the possible outcomes of assessment, reports the results of certain kinds of assessments to parents and school authorities. These results are intended to reflect the progress that students have made during a particular period of time.

In most school systems teachers must assign grades. Parents and students consider grades to be very important. Although some school systems have adopted rigid rules that specify how to assign grades, clever teachers can still elaborate their own grading procedures. Sometimes they do. In general, this is one part of teaching in which teachers do have options.

Some teacher education programs may not spend enough time considering grading practices, despite the acknowledged importance of grades. Such programs may recognize that grading serves a covert as well as an overt purpose, and they may not want to address the controversial issues that underlie a consideration of grading practices.

John Holt (1964, 1967) is often quoted as saying that the chief purpose of schools is to separate winners from losers. You must decide for yourself whether or not Holt has a valid point. In any case, it is hard to deny that children who "earn" poor grades are "losers." Bloom (1977) believes that about 1/3 of schoolchildren are stunted by repeated and persistent failure experiences in school. Bloom interprets failure as grades of D or F. Whether we like it or not, teachers, parents, students, and even eminent researchers persistently use grades to compare students.

In looking at grading practices, and in thinking about how you will award grades in the future, you will want to use the grading process to elicit maximum effort from your students. Repeated failure will not accomplish this end.

Rationale for Activities

The activities in this module will help you focus your attention on two important considerations about grading. These considerations are reflected in teachers' decisions about (1) the school assignments that should be counted toward a grade and (2) the type of grading system that should be used.

When you complete these activities you should have the basis for determining how grades are computed in the classroom where you are doing an observation. By comparing your observations with the stated policy of the school system, you will be able to get a sense of the way in which your cooperating teacher uses or circumvents the policy in order to elaborate his or her personal sense about the nature and purpose of grading.

Bibliography

You might find the following books and articles helpful as you consider the issues related to classroom grading practices.

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OBSERVING CLASSROOM GRADING PRACTICES - Activity #5-1
What Assignments Are Counted Toward a Grade?

PART I: Seatwork: Useful Independent Practice or the Basis for Grading?

Instructions:

This is an observation form: do not interview the teacher!

This part of activity #1 asks you to observe the way in which your cooperating teacher treats seatwork. For the purpose of this assignment, independent practice and grading are considered mutually exclusive. This distinction is made because, in most models of direct instruction, independent practice provides students with the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. Grading such assignments serves to punish students for their mistakes. Therefore, if seatwork is assigned a grade, and the grade is recorded, then the seatwork assignment does not provide independent practice.

Spend an hour observing students who are completing seatwork in the classroom. Then answer the following questions to determine if your teacher uses seatwork for grading or for another purpose.

1. Do students ask questions of the teacher while completing seatwork? _____ Yes _____ No

2. Is the teacher doing something else while students do seatwork? _____ Yes _____ No

3. Are students free to consult with one another while completing seatwork? _____ Yes _____ No

4. Is seatwork corrected in class? _____ Yes _____ No

5. Do students correct their own seatwork? _____ Yes _____ No

6. Does the teacher discuss correct and incorrect answers? _____ Yes _____ No

7. Do students record marks like "A" or "C" or "90%", "72%" on their papers? _____ Yes _____ No

8. Is seatwork collected from all students at the same time? _____ Yes _____ No

9. Did you observe the teacher recording grades from seatwork? _____ Yes _____ No

Key for Interpreting Observation Results

1. If the answer to questions #1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 is "yes", it is likely (but not certain) that your teacher uses seatwork for the purpose of giving students independent practice.

2. If the answer to questions #2, 3, 4, and 5 is "no", it is likely (but not certain) that your teacher uses seatwork for the purpose of grading.

3. If the answer to questions #7 and #9 is "yes" then it is certain that your teacher uses seatwork for the purposes of grading.

4. Any other combination of answers yields ambiguous results.

Interpreting Observation Results

Answer the following questions based on your observations and on your own views about the issue of grading.

1. If your results were ambiguous, what do you surmise about how your teacher treats seatwork? Explain and corroborate with answers 1-9, above and other events you have observed during your field study experience.

2. Given that the most defensible purpose of seatwork is to provide drill and practice, is it ever appropriate to grade seatwork? Why or Why not?

3. Given that the purpose of seatwork is to provide drill and practice, when is the best time to correct seatwork?

4. Why do you suppose teachers often grade seatwork?

5. How could seatwork be used for <u>assessment</u> rather than for grading?

PART II: Teacher-Made Tests

Instructions:

To find out how your cooperating teacher develops and uses tests in the classroom, it will be necessary for you to interview him or her. Use the questions below as the basis for your interview.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS -- Activity #5-1, Part II

1. What percentage of the classroom tests that you use do you construct yourself?

2. What percentage of the classroom tests that you use come from adopted textbook series?

3. Do you get classroom tests from any other sources? What are these sources?

4. How often do you give tests?

5. Do you make a distinction between quizzes and tests? How do you quantify this distinction (e.g., weighting)?

6. If you weight tests more heavily than quizzes, how do you calculate this weighting? What is the specific formula you use?

7. Do you calculate test grades by comparison to an absolute standard, or do you curve grades? Do you use a combination of these two methods? If so, when do you use each method?

8. What kinds of items do you include on your tests?

9. If you include essay items, how do you grade them?

10. Do you give partial credit on any items on your tests? When do you give partial credit?

11. Do you review tests in class? Under what circumstances do you allow a student to disagree with your scoring of his or her test?

12. Do you allow students to keep their corrected test papers so that they can study for more comprehensive tests that will be administered in the future?

OBSERVING CLASSROOM GRADING PRACTICES - Activity #5-2
The Type of Grading System

Background Information:

According to Kubiszyn and Borich (1984), there are 5 types of grading sustems that teachers might adopt. These are defined below.

A Grading System Based on Comparisons Among Students. This grading system is popularly termed, "grading on the curve." Technically, it is called norm-referenced grading. Using this system, the teacher compares the performance of all of the students in his or her class. Given this comparison, the teacher assigns "A's," "B's," "C's," and so on to certain, predetermined proportions of the class. Thus, the students with scores in the top 10%, for example, would get "A's." Those in the next highest 25% would get "B's," and those with scores in the lowest 5% would get "F's."

A Grading System Based on Comparison with Established Standards. This grading system is often referred to as criterion-referenced grading. Using this grading system, a teacher decides in advance the level of performance that is necessary in order for students to obtain a particular grade. The teacher might decide that a 90% or better is necessary for an "A," an 80% - 89% for a "B," a 70% - 79% for a "C," and a 60 - 69% for a "D." Based on this system, it is possible for all of the students in a class to get "A's" on a test or assignment or for all of them to fail.

A Grading System Based on Comparison of Achievement with Aptitude. This grading system attempts to establish different standards for students of different ability levels. Using this system, the teacher tries to determine whether or not each student is working up to his or her potential. Kubiszyn and Borich (1984) describe some of the drawbacks of this grading system. They conclude, "such a system, as appealing as it is at first glance, is not practical" (Kubiszyn & Borich, 1984, p. 137).

A Grading System Based on Comparison of Achievement with Effort. Using this grading system, the teacher tries to establish different standards for students in accordance with their levels of effort. Students who work hard, regardless of their objective performance, are given higher grades. According to Kubiszyn and Borich (1984) this system is troublesome, in part because the measurement of effort cannot be objective.

A Grading System Based on Comparison of Achievement with Improvement. This grading system assigns marks on the basis of students' improvement between the beginning and the end of an instructional segment (e.g., unit, marking period). Using this system, teachers assign the highest grades to those students who make the greatest improvement. Such a system causes problems for high-achievers whose performance at the beginning of an instructional segment may already be at a high level of mastery. Although these students may demonstrate excellent performance at the end of the instructional segment, they often do not demonstrate much improvement.

Instructions:

In order to find out the type of grading system that your cooperating teacher uses, you will need to interview him or her. Use the following questions as the basis for your interview.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS -- Activity #5-2

1. Do you grade students by comparing them with other students in the class? How do you make this comparison?

2. Do you grade students by comparing their performance to an arbitrary standard? What do you do when all of the students make "A,s"? What happens when they all get "D's" or fail?

3. How do you tailor your grading system to take into account students' varying ability levels?

4. Does your grading system make allowances for students' different levels of effort? How is a determination of effort included in the calculation of each student's grade? Do you ever use grades to reward a student for his or her effort?

5. How do you grade low-achieving students who make alot of improvement during a marking period? Is their improvement reflected in their grade? Do you ever use grades to reward students for making improvements in their academic work? Do you ever use grades to reward students for making improvements in their behavior?

FIELD STUDY REPORT #5

1. Based on your observation, how you think your cooperating teacher uses seatwork? If it is graded, how is it weighted in comparison with tests and other assignments?

2. Based on your interview, briefly describe your cooperating teacher's testing practices? How does he or she generate classroom tests? How important are tests to the determination of students' grades?

3. What grading system does your cooperating teacher use? Does he or she use parts of more than one grading system? How are these parts integrated?

4. Do you think your cooperating teachers' grading system is fair? Why or why not?

5. Based on your observations, reflections, and reading, what grading system do you think you will adopt when you become a teacher? Why will you choose this grading system?